

MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY | DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS

WEEK 06 / 14

From Closed Communities to Cursed Images

2014–present: club goods, post-irony, and why bad images look honest.

Economics Concept: **Club Goods & Signaling Theory**

HISTORICAL BRIDGE

Club Goods: **Exclusion by Design**

- As open platforms monetized, subcultures retreated into gated 'club goods' — closed groups such as KGB, BGY, and AOG.
- Exclusive vernacular and strict admission barriers preserved a shared culture that open pages could no longer sustain.
- The result was multi-layered, self-referential post-irony, legible only to people already inside the club.



CORE CONCEPT

Signaling: Why **Bad Looks Honest**

- A highly polished graphic is instantly recognized as promotional — it signals a firm, not a peer.
- Blurry, low-resolution, deep-fried imagery signals the opposite: it could not have been produced by a firm, therefore it must be authentic.
- Low production quality is not a failure of signaling. It **is** the signal.

INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE

This is the same logic as a hand-written sign outscoring a billboard for trustworthiness in the right context.



SAME MASCOT, SIGNAL REVERSED

PRACTICAL WORKSHOP

Deep-Frying as a Production Method

- Techniques: repeated compression, oversaturation, contrast blowouts, and deliberate artifacting.
- The goal is a specific, reproducible degradation — not random incompetence.
- You will be graded on whether the degradation is deliberate and legible, not on how 'bad' the image looks in isolation.



PROCESS, NOT ACCIDENT

TAKEAWAY OF THE WEEK

Authenticity Is a Production Choice

Low fidelity is a costly-looking signal that costs nothing to fake once you understand the rule — which is exactly why everyone eventually catches on and moves the goalposts.

NEXT WEEK → VIDEO EDITING LAB: THE 20-SECOND SHITPOST SPRINT